

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended) A method for providing traceability of mail pieces, comprising the steps of:

creating a plurality of mail pieces;

providing a first source tracing code on each of said plurality of mail pieces, said first source tracing code corresponding to a mail producer ~~source of the mail pieces~~;

creating a mailing statement for said plurality of mail pieces;

providing a second source tracing code on said mailing statement, said second source tracing code corresponding to the mail producer ~~said source of the mail pieces~~;

submitting said plurality of mail pieces and the mailing statement to a postal service facility;

and

verifying that said first source tracing code corresponds to said second source tracing code, wherein verified mail pieces can be traced back to the mail producer ~~source of the mail pieces~~ by reading the first source tracing code.

2. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 1, wherein the step of verifying includes the steps of:

scanning said mailing statement to read said second tracing code; and

scanning at least a sampling of said plurality of mail pieces to read said first tracing code.

3. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the mail pieces define certain characteristics, and wherein said first tracing code further corresponds to the characteristics of the

mail pieces, wherein the first tracing code is independent of a meter imprint, digital postage mark or postal indicia.

4. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said first tracing code is embedded into a digital image, a text, a watermark, paper fibers or invisible ink, independent of a meter imprint, digital postage mark or postal indicia.

5. (Canceled)

6. (Canceled)

7. (Canceled)

8. (Currently amended) A method for providing traceability of mail pieces, comprising the steps of:

creating a plurality of mail pieces;

providing a first source tracing code on each of said plurality of mail pieces, said first source tracing code corresponding to a mail producer ~~source of the mail pieces~~;

creating a mailing statement for said plurality of mail pieces;

providing a second source tracing code on said mailing statement, said second source tracing code corresponding to the mail producer ~~said source of the mail pieces~~;

submitting said plurality of mail pieces and the mailing statement to a postal service facility;

capturing and recording an identity of an individual submitting said plurality of mail pieces and the mailing statement;

storing the first or second source tracing code in association with the recorded identity of the individual; and

subsequently using the first or second source tracing code to trace at least one of the plurality of mail pieces back to at least one of the individual submitting the mail pieces and the mail producer source of the mail pieces.

9. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 1, wherein the step of providing a first tracing code on each of said plurality of mail pieces includes the step of passing each of said plurality of mail pieces through tracing code producing equipment, independent of a meter.

10. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 2, wherein the first tracing code is independent from a meter imprint, digital postage mark or postal indicia.

11. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 2, further comprising the step of providing an alert indication when said first tracing code does not correspond to said second tracing code.

12. (Currently amended) A method for providing traceability of mail pieces, comprising the steps of:

creating a plurality of mail pieces via mail production equipment;

providing an encrypted source tracing code on each of the plurality of mail pieces via source tracing code producing equipment, the encrypted source tracing code corresponding to a creator of the plurality of mail pieces;

scanning each of the plurality of mail pieces to read the encrypted source tracing code;

verifying that the encrypted source tracing code corresponds to the creator ~~a source~~ of the mail pieces; and

creating a mailing statement for the plurality of mail pieces via mailing statement producing equipment, the mailing statement including a corresponding source tracing code corresponding to the encrypted source tracing code on each of the plurality of mail pieces, wherein verified mail pieces can be traced back to the creator ~~source~~ of the mail pieces by reading the encrypted source tracing code.

13. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 12, further comprising the steps of:
submitting the plurality of mail pieces and the mailing statement to a postal service facility;
scanning the mailing statement to read the corresponding source tracing code;
scanning at least a sampling of the plurality of mail pieces to read the encrypted source tracing code; and

verifying that the encrypted source tracing code corresponds to the corresponding source tracing code.

14. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 12, wherein the encrypted source tracing code is embedded into a digital image, a text, a watermark, paper fibers or invisible ink, independent of a meter imprint, digital postage mark or postal indicia.

15. (Currently amended) The method of Claim 12, further comprising the steps of capturing and recording the identity of an individual submitting the plurality of mail;

storing the encrypted source tracing code or the corresponding source tracing code in association with the recorded identity of the individual; and

subsequently using the encrypted source tracing code or the corresponding source tracing code to trace at least one of the plurality of mail pieces back to at least one of the individual submitting the mail pieces and the creator source of the mail pieces.

16. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 12, wherein the encrypted source tracing code is independent from a meter imprint, digital postage mark or postal indicia.

17. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 13, further comprising the step of providing an alert indication when the encrypted source tracing code does not correspond to the corresponding source tracing code.

18. (Currently amended) A method for providing traceability of mail pieces, comprising the steps of:

receiving at least one mail piece at a postal service facility;

capturing and storing the identity of an individual submitting the at least one mail piece;

providing a source tracing code on the at least one mail piece via source tracing code producing equipment, after the at least one mail piece has been submitted to the postal facility; [[and]]

storing information produced by the source tracing code producing equipment in association with the captured and stored identity of the individual submitting the at least one mail piece; and using the source tracing code to trace the at least one mail piece back to the individual.

19. (Canceled)

20. (Canceled)

21. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 18, wherein the step of capturing and storing the identity of an individual comprises the step of recording at least one physical characteristic of the individual submitting the at least one mail piece via recording equipment.

22. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 21, wherein the recording equipment comprises camera equipment, video equipment, finger print equipment or retina scan equipment.

23. (Canceled)

24. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 8, wherein the step of capturing and recording the identity of an individual comprises the step of recording at least one physical characteristic of the individual.

25. (Canceled)

26. (Currently amended) The method of Claim 11, further comprising the step of tracing the first or second tracing code back to the mail producer ~~source of the mail pieces~~ to determine a reason why the first tracing code does not correspond to the second tracing code.

27. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 15, wherein the step of capturing and recording the identity of an individual comprises the step of recording at least one physical characteristic of the individual.

28. (Canceled)

29. (Currently amended) The method of Claim 17, further comprising the step of tracing the encrypted source tracing code or the corresponding source tracing code back to the creator source of the mail pieces to determine a reason why the encrypted source tracing code does not correspond to the corresponding source tracing code.

30. (Currently amended) A method for providing traceability of mail pieces, comprising the steps of:

providing an encrypted tracing code on at least one envelope;
subsequently providing the at least one envelope having the encrypted tracing code to a mailer to produce at least one mail piece;
recording the identity of the mailer in association with the encrypted tracing code;
receiving the at least one mail piece at a postal service facility; and
reading the encrypted tracing code on the at least one mail piece to verify the mailer source of the mail piece.

31. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 30, further comprising the steps of:

capturing and storing the identity of an individual submitting the at least one mail piece to the postal facility in association with the encrypted tracing code; and

subsequently using the encrypted tracing code to trace the at least one mail piece back to the individual.

32. (Currently amended) The method of Claim 30, further comprising the step of tracing the encrypted tracing code back to the mailer ~~when the source of the mail piece cannot be verified.~~

33. (New) The method of Claim 30, further comprising the step of providing an alert indication when the mailer cannot be verified.